

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-16. Please insert new claims 17 through 32 as follows:

17. (New) A process for detaching an oxygen-containing and/or nitrogenous layer on a semiconductor or metal surface, comprising;
contacting at least a part of the surface with a water-free nitrogenous liquid which comprises a fluorine-containing substance; and
separating the surface from the liquid.

18. (New) A process on accordance with Claim 17, characterized by the application of an electrical voltage between the surface, the liquid and an electrode according to a given voltage-time curve.

19. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the nitrogenous liquid consists of nitrogen and hydrogen.

20. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the nitrogenous liquid comprises NH₃, N₂H₄, N₂H₄•xH₂O or mixtures of these compounds.

21. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the nitrogenous liquid is free from dissolved or molecularly bound oxygen, free from water or free from both.

22. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the surface is part of a semiconductor substrate which essentially comprises silicon.

23. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that, apart from nitrogen, the nitrogenous liquid only contains the elements hydrogen, oxygen, fluorine or carbon or combinations and/or compounds of these elements or their isotopes.

24. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the surface comprises structures.

25. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that any oxygen-containing and/or nitrogenous compounds are at least partially removed from the surface prior to contacting the surface with the nitrogenous liquid.

26. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 25, characterized in that the oxygen-containing compounds comprises SiO_x or SiO₂.

27. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 18, characterized in that the electrical voltage comprises a DC voltage component or a time-voltage profile of

between 0 V and 20 V, and that the metal or semiconductor surface forms an anode with respect to at least one electrode.

28. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that the surface is subjected to at least a lithographic, a thermal, a plasma-chemical treatment step, or a combination of the above steps after the separation step.

29. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 18, characterized in that the electrical voltage between the surface and at least one electrode comprises an alternating voltage.

30. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 17, characterized in that any oxygen-containing layer is detached from the surface *in situ* by the nitrogenous liquid.

31. (New) A process in accordance with Claim 30, characterized in that the nitrogenous liquid comprises HF, NH₄F or mixtures thereof.

32. (New) A semiconductor substrate treated in accordance with Claim 17.